

Small Group Guide: Truth or Counterfeit

The Real Thing: Week 3

1 John 2:18-29

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time asking God to help you discern truth from error and to grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ice Breaker

Share about a time you encountered something counterfeit (fake money, knockoff product, etc.). How did you realize it wasn't genuine?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. Counterfeit Faith Eventually Departs from Truth

- We live in "the last hour" - the time between Jesus' first and second coming
- False teachers may look like genuine believers initially but eventually leave
- Perseverance reveals genuine faith - those who truly belong to Jesus will continue following Him

2. Genuine Believers Possess the Truth

- Every believer has the "anointing" of the Holy Spirit
- The Spirit helps us recognize truth from error
- The central question is always: "What do you believe about Jesus?"

3. Genuine Believers Abide in Christ

- We remain in the gospel we first received
 - We hold onto the promise of eternal life
 - We increasingly resemble our Heavenly Father
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Read 1 John 2:18-19.** What does John mean by "they went out from us, but they were not really of us"? How does this challenge the idea that anyone who once attended church is automatically saved?
2. **Read 1 John 2:20-23.** What is the "anointing" John refers to? How does this encourage you in your ability to recognize false teaching?

3. Why does John emphasize that denying Jesus means you don't have the Father either (v. 23)? What does this tell us about religious claims that honor God but reject Jesus?

Personal Reflection

4. The sermon asked: "Are you building your life on the true Jesus revealed in Scripture or on a version of Jesus that is more comfortable or convenient?" How would you honestly answer this question?
5. What are some ways our culture tries to redefine Jesus to make Him more "acceptable"? (Examples: Jesus without judgment, Jesus without lordship, Jesus as merely a good teacher, etc.)
6. The pastor said, "The best defense against deception is a deep knowledge of the truth." How well do you know the real Jesus? What practices help you grow in knowing Him?

Practical Application

7. **Read 1 John 2:24-25.** What does it mean practically to "remain in what you heard from the beginning"? How can we help each other do this?
8. The sermon mentioned that children often resemble their parents. In what ways are you beginning to resemble your Heavenly Father? What areas of your life still need transformation?
9. **Read 1 John 2:28-29.** How does the promise of Jesus' return motivate you to remain in Him? How should it change the way you live this week?

Going Deeper

Group Exercise: Identifying Counterfeits

Discuss these common false teachings about Jesus. How would you respond to someone who believed these things?

- "Jesus was a great teacher, but not God"
- "All religions lead to the same God"
- "Jesus accepts everyone, so lifestyle choices don't matter"
- "You can believe in God without going to church or reading the Bible"

What Bible verses would you use to address each one?

Self-Examination Questions

(Take a few minutes of quiet reflection)

The sermon ended with three diagnostic questions. Consider these honestly:

1. **Am I building my life on the true Jesus revealed in Scripture or on a version of Jesus that is more comfortable or convenient?**
2. **Am I remaining in Jesus day by day or have I begun to drift from Him?**
3. **If someone looked at the direction of my life, would they see evidence that I am abiding in Him?**

Share with the group what God is speaking to you through these questions.

Action Steps

Choose one or two to focus on this week:

- **Daily Bible Reading:** Commit to reading one chapter of 1 John each day this week, asking God to deepen your understanding of genuine faith.
 - **Abiding Practice:** Set aside 15 minutes each day to simply be with Jesus - pray, read Scripture, listen to worship music, and practice His presence.
 - **Truth Check:** Evaluate one teaching, podcast, or book you've been influenced by. Does it align with what Scripture says about Jesus?
 - **Share Your Faith:** Look for one "divine opportunity" this week to share the true Jesus with someone who needs to know Him.
 - **Memorize Scripture:** Learn 1 John 2:24-25 as a reminder to remain in what you've heard from the beginning.
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Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

Share and Pray:

- Pray for anyone in the group struggling with doubts or confusion about their faith
- Pray for protection from false teaching and deception
- Pray for opportunities to share the true Jesus with others
- Pray that each group member would grow in resembling Christ

Closing Prayer Focus: Thank God for the gift of His Spirit who teaches us truth. Ask Him to help your group remain faithful to Jesus and to recognize any counterfeits that may come your way.

For Next Week

- Read 1 John 3:1-10
- Reflect on what it means to be called "children of God"
- Come prepared to discuss how God's love transforms our identity and behavior